

XX.—*Letters, Notes, &c.*

WE have received the following Letters:—

SIRS,—There must, I suppose, be many Members of the B. O. U. who, like myself, take a general interest in Ornithology, while having neither time nor inclination to qualify as specialists in the subject. I think that many such Members will agree with me in protesting against the changes which have been proposed in the nomenclature of our British birds during the last few years. I am well aware that the worship of an elusive priority has introduced confusion in other groups of the animal kingdom, but I know of no group in which such instability is to be found as is to be witnessed in the writings of ornithologists. So great is the change that, for people like myself, the Latin nomenclature often ceases to define, and the English name, when it is given, becomes the only clue to identity. Who but a specialist habitually disporting himself in such arid fields would recognise *Anas platyrhynchos* ('Ibis,' 1912, p. 79) as our familiar *Anas boschas*, and would justify such a change? Again, on what authority are such names as *Ixobrychus* (p. 78), *Egathus* (p. 77), *Tyto* (p. 71)—to choose but a few—introduced to supersede names consecrated by universal use?

Is it not time that the Union should set a limit to such name-shuffling? Would it not be practicable for a Committee of the Union to draw up a list of European (or even only British) birds with Latin names appended, and let no generic or specific names but these be printed in 'The Ibis'? Surely Latin binomial or trinomial nomenclature should be regarded as an instrument of precise description, and not be used as a weapon of offence.

Yours &c.,

Ingham Old Hall,  
February 10th, 1912.

ROBERT GURNEY.

[We quite agree with our correspondent's remarks, but may mention that a new edition of the B. O. U. 'List of

British Birds' is in course of preparation, and, when ready, will doubtless be used by all writers in this Journal.—  
[EDD.]

---

SIRS,—For some time past I have been engaged in writing the Life of Sir William Jardine, the naturalist.

Would you be so good as to insert this letter in your Journal, in the hope that, if it catches the eye of anyone who might be able to assist me, either by letters from Sir William Jardine or from personal acquaintance, they would communicate with me?

Yours &c.,

HUGH S. GLADSTONE.

Capenoch, Thornhill, Dumfriesshire,  
March 12th, 1912.

---

*The Birds of Sinai.*—At the Anniversary Meeting of the German Ornithological Society held at Eberswalde, in Prussia, in October last, Herr Graf von Zedlitz gave an account, as we learn from the 'Journal für Ornithologie,' of his recent visit to the Sinaitic Peninsula. He remarked that the district, from an ornithological point of view, had been comparatively little explored. In 1898 Professor Koenig, of Bonn, went there, but his bird-collection has not yet been worked out. The starting-point of Graf von Zedlitz's journey was El-Tor. From there he went towards the mountain-range, which was crossed from west to east. A full report of his journey will be published by the traveller, but a few short details may be mentioned. The genera *Cercomela*, *Pycnonotus*, *Ammoperdix*, and a species of Pigeon very similar to *Columba schimperi*, might be regarded as characteristic birds of Sinai. *Sylvia rueppelli* lives in the tamarisks, *Scotocerca inquieta* (newly fledged young of which were found as early as April) spends its days in the rough bush, and *Phylloscopus bonellii orientalis* nests in the smaller shrubs.

Particularly noticeable is the black Starling, *Amydrus tristrami*; it resembles the Alpine Chough in appearance, and animates the steep rocks with its shrill piping. Moreover, there are to be observed *Bubo uscalaphus*, *Lanius ancheri*, *Riparia rupestris obsoleta*, and *Dromolæa leucopyga*. *Carpodacus synaicus* keeps (even during the nesting-season) together in small flocks. *Ammodramus deserti fratercula* and *Corvus affinis*, as well as *Gypaetus*, were met with, but specimens of the last could not be obtained. *Phænicurus mesoleucus* is perhaps a breeding bird of this district—at all events, it was observed in spring. Besides these, very many migratory birds were observed, and on the 1st of May upwards of 1200 Storks were seen in one flock.

On the whole, it may be said that in general characters the birds of the Sinaitic Peninsula are Asiatic and closely allied to those of Palestine, but have nothing in common with those of Egypt. The district furnishes a splendid road for migrants; the birds fly quite close to the ground, up and down the valleys, as there is much less wind there than on the hills. Our well-known *Sylvia curruca* and *Sylvia atricapilla* were observed in numbers. The males of the latter, even in spring, frequently shewed a brown crest.

[The chief authority on the Birds of Sinai is, of course, Tristram's 'Fauna and Flora of Palestine.' But the late C. W. Wyatt (see 'Ibis,' 1870, p. 1) wrote a special paper on the subject, and the same author's notes in the Report of the Ordnance Survey of Sinai (see 'Ibis,' 1873, p. 429) should also be consulted.—EDD.]

---

*The National Museum of Natural History of Buenos Ayres.*—We are informed that Dr. Angel Gallardo has been appointed Director of the National Museum of Natural History at Buenos Ayres in succession to Dr. Florentino Ameghino, the well-known Palæontologist, who died in August last.